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# Articles in Today's Clips

**Monday, September 29, 2008**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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# WZZM 13 News - Print Editon

## Holland baby beaten, now on life support

Posted By: [Nick Monacelli](#)

■ 25 mins ago

HOLLAND TOWNSHIP, Mich. (WZZM) - An Ottawa County father is in jail, accused of beating his 3-month-old son.

Scott Crowder, 21, is accused of hitting and shaking his son who is now in critical condition at DeVos Children's Hospital.

Kobi's family said Crowder confessed to hitting and shaking Kobi Friday night, and now Ottawa County investigators have charged him with first degree child abuse.

His family also said he is very critical; doctors say they won't know if he'll survive until at least 3 days from now.

His brain is bruised and swollen, he's also having seizures.

Police have not released any information regarding the incident, however the family has told us Scott Crowder has past domestic violence charges, including one charge involving the baby's mother.

They say the mother and Crowder have been separated for months now and he was not living in their Holland Township home.

Sunday, the family was sitting by Kobi's side in the hospital, but did want to spread the message of domestic violence and child abuse, saying it can happen to anyone at anytime.

Kobi's mother never thought it could happen to her children; they do have another child, a 14-month-old girl.

Only time will tell how Kobi does, his family though is asking for prayers.

Doctors have said if he survives he'll most likely have brain damage.



Kobi Crowder

ADVERTISEMENT

Originally posted: September 28, 2008

## **Children left at Nebraska hospitals: more details**

Several teenagers and pre-teens left by families at Nebraska hospitals over the past several weeks are mentally ill or have severe behavioral problems, according to the Omaha World-Herald.

The newspaper reports [today](#) that families sought help for these violent or out-of-control kids, unsuccessfully.

-- A 15-year-old boy who would punch holes in the wall at home and throw things in school. His father is described in court records as "psychotic and a drug user who had been convicted of misdemeanor child abuse," the World-Herald reports.

The boy was living with an aunt; when she tried calling a statewide human services hotline "she got no useful information," the newspaper said. Separately, officials with Nebraska's child welfare division told the aunt the state couldn't intervene unless the boy committed a crime.

-- A 13-year-old girl who'd been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, fetal alcohol syndrome, and severe behavioral problems. She was prone to fly into rages and had been living at Boys Town until her great aunt removed her at the beginning of the summer, concerned that the girl was being medicated too heavily.

After the girl smeared her menstrual blood on the walls of her house, the "aunt called agencies for help but said she could not find a program," the World-Herald reports. When the girl tried to jump out of a moving car, her great aunt took her to a hospital and asked for help.

"I can't do nothing for her anymore. It's too dangerous," she told the Omaha newspaper.

-- A 15-year-old boy who'd been diagnosed with depression and using drugs. Over the summer, the boy had been found carrying marijuana and had run away from home before entering a diversion program. When police brought him back, he reportedly began to express suicidal intentions.

His uncle, the boy's guardian, took him to an Omaha hospital for a psychiatric evaluation, but the hospital refused to admit the teenager when he said he wasn't suicidal.

"Fearing for his life, that's when I made the decision that I made," said the uncle, who

then turned the teenager in under Nebraska's new "safe haven" law, according to the World-Herald.

-- An 11-year-old boy who'd threatened to kill his mother and siblings. The World-Herald reports that the mom arranged for the boy to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital but that he refused to take his medications.

"She has exhausted all of her options," according to a police report cited by the World-Herald.

Under Nebraska's new "safe haven" law -- the last in the nation -- seven teens have been dropped off at hospitals over the past several weeks by parents or guardians. The Nebraska law is the only in the U.S. that doesn't set an age limit on children who can be handed over to authorities, no questions asked.

In Nebraska, the debate now centers around the adequacy of services for families with troubled kids. A lack of resources prevents families from receiving needed help, advocates claim in another [story](#) published by the Omaha World-Herald today.

"There's not enough places to turn," said Eve Bleyhl, executive director of the Nebraska Family Support Network, quoted in the paper.

Nebraska human services officials dispute that allegation. According to the World-Herald, the director of the state's department of health and human services said a review of cases "had not turned up problems with the state's system for responding to families in crisis."

The case that's received the most attention involves a father who deposited 9 of his 10 children, ages 1 to 17, at an Omaha hospital. It's not clear from news reports if any of the children were seriously disturbed.

This is an issue that is resonating with people across the country. Many of you responded to my Friday [post](#), and it appears many of you think the dad who relinquished responsibility for his nine kids did the right thing, especially if the alternative was abuse and neglect.

Unfortunately, we still don't know a lot about what happened in this particular case.

Did the father call family members and ask for their support? Did he call service agencies and admit that he needed help? Did the children have any advance warning? Or were they caught by surprise, faced with losing their home and their sole remaining parent after their mother died suddenly a year and a half before?

Nebraska lawmakers will now consider whether the state's new law needs to be changed to narrow its scope to babies and infants, the World-Herald [reports](#).

I offended some readers by remarking Friday that the moral of this story is that "safe haven" laws need to be written carefully. I continue to think that's the case, especially when older children are involved. But clearly this story raises other complicated issues. In particular, are we doing enough to help families with severely disturbed kids, not only in Nebraska but in other states as well?



September 29, 2008

Our towns: News from our local communities

## Mid-Michigan

### Children's Trust Fund event raises \$450K

About \$450,000 was raised through the sixth annual Children's Trust Fund Signature Event last week to fund child abuse prevention efforts in Michigan.

Sponsorships were up more than 40 percent for the event, while expenses decreased by 20 percent, organizers said.

Attendees bid on more than 70 feature auction items ranging from vacations to Cancun, Hawaii and Austria; college and professional sporting event ticket packages; sports memorabilia, such as an autographed Lebron James jersey and boxing gloves worn and autographed by Muhammad Ali; and fine art and jewelry.

For the first time, funds also were raised through an online auction.

Since 1982, the CTF has raised more than \$80 million and provided support to more than 8 million Michigan children and families.

- Lansing State Journal



## **\$450,000 raised to fight child abuse**

**Friday, September 26, 2008 at 3:09 p.m.**

Approximately \$450,000 was raised through the sixth-annual Children's Trust Fund Signature Event Thursday evening to fund child abuse prevention efforts in Michigan.

"We are extremely pleased with the success of the Children's Trust Fund Signature Event," said Sen. Randy Richardville, R-Monroe, one of the event's legislative co-chairs.

"Many businesses, lawmakers, and residents donated their time and financial resources to support this effort because they recognize the importance of protecting Michigan's children. I greatly appreciate their support as we were able to increase the overall revenue by 10 percent this year."

Sponsorships were up more than 40 percent for the event while expenses decreased by 20 percent. Northwest Airlines, Great Lakes Capital Fund and DTE Energy Foundation were official event sponsors while many other businesses, residents and associations also donated funds and resources.

Attendees bid on more than 70 feature auction items ranging from vacations to Cancun, Hawaii and Austria; college and professional sporting event ticket packages; sports memorabilia, such as an autographed LeBron James jersey and boxing gloves worn and autographed by Muhammad Ali; and fine art and jewelry. For the first time ever, funds were also raised through an online auction.

"We couldn't make our dream of stopping child abuse in Michigan a reality without the hundreds of Michigan businesses and residents who have generously donated gifts and their time to this worthy cause," said Sen. Patty Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township, another legislative co-chair. "Without everyone's support, this event and the nearly half million dollars we raised, would not be possible."

Former Lt. Governor Connie Binsfeld and Sen. Debbie Stabenow served as honorary co-chairs for the evening. Binsfeld was recognized for her outstanding support of the organization during her service as a state legislator and as the lieutenant governor under John Engler.

In addition to Richardville and Birkholz, Sen. Martha Scott, D-Highland Park; Rep. Barb Byrum, D-Onondaga; Rep. Dave Hildenbrand, R-Lowell; and Rep. Michael Sak, D-Grand Rapids co-chaired the event.

The CTF, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary, is the only statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect in Michigan. Since 1982, the organization has raised more than \$80 million and provided support to more than 8 million Michigan children and families. The organization does not use state tax dollars.

**Nontaxable income**

- From Mitchell Haley of Olivet: "Someone reading your Sept. 25 column could end up with the mistaken impression that child support is taxable income.

"Child support is neither deductible nor taxable. If Ms. Corey has been paying income tax on her support payments, she should seek professional guidance in preparing amended returns for the years in which she overpaid.

"Child support IS 'household income' for certain Michigan tax credits. Child support and nontaxable government benefits do reduce the Homestead Property Tax Credit and Home Heating Credit."

- From Joyce LaFleur, district coordinator of TCES Income Tax: "If Jana Corey is doing her own income tax, or if she is paying a paid preparer to do her taxes, one thing should be made clear: "Child support payments are not taxable to the re-cipient, nor are the payments deductible to the person making the payments.

"However, the child support must be included in the Schedule of Household Income when calculating either a Home Heating Credit or a Property Tax Credit."

- From Janet Mitchell of Haslett: "Regarding your Sept. 22 column ...

"I have been on the Direct Payment Plan and Budget Plan for the past 20 years, including one service relocation.

"I have never had a concern or a problem with my Consumers Energy billing."

Call John Schneider at 377-1175, send a fax to 377-1298 or e-mail [jschneid@lsj.com](mailto:jschneid@lsj.com).



September 28, 2008

## State wins \$12,000 grant for poverty summit

By *GINGER GIBSON*  
*The News Journal*

The state was awarded a \$12,000 grant last week to conduct summits bringing together government and business leaders to develop an agenda to address poverty, primarily among children.

The National Governor's Association announced that Delaware is one of the 10 states to receive funds to explore poverty and develop a policy agenda to address some of the problems. The acceptance of the grant requires that the summit develop a comprehensive plan to reduce poverty in the state.

"I'm pleased NGA recognized that Delaware is a national leader in fighting child poverty," Gov. Ruth Ann Minner said in a news release. "Growing up in poverty affects every aspect of our children's lives – their health, safety, education and future earning potential, which is why we are working diligently to combat this problem."

According to NGA, one in eight Americans live in poverty, including 13 million children. To respond to the level of the poverty NGA's Center for Best Practices is using the grants to spur discussion and change in policy at a state level.

**The other states awarded grants were Arizona, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Ohio, Vermont, Virginia, Virgin Islands and Wisconsin.**

"Many states already have taken action to reduce poverty," said John Thomasian, director of the NGA Center in a news release. "Our hope is these summits help governors in their efforts to advance innovative strategies that increase economic opportunities and reduce the devastating effects of poverty on their citizens."

Minner announced she will channel the grant money through the Child Poverty Task Force that she established in 2007.

State Rep. Terry Schooley, D- Newark/Chapel Hill, who also is director of Kids Count in Delaware, said the task force has been working to gather information about poverty in the state and talking with experts to gather recommendations.

"The timing of the summit for next spring is perfect," said Schooley in a news release. "Now, we are poised for the next step: gathering together key stakeholders and statewide leaders to create a pathway for alleviating child poverty and to strengthen all Delaware families."

Schooley said the grant was awarded to the state after an application process and that all of the gubernatorial candidates had agreed that the summit would be a positive step. The summit must take place before April 30.

According to the NGA Center, the grants were awarded based on which applications indicated they had a model to connect and build upon existing efforts to reduce poverty, involve state and local leaders from government and the private sector and advance a state-wide agenda to promote economic opportunity and reduce poverty.





## MICHIGAN REPORT

The Capitol Record Since 1906

REPORT NO. 187, VOLUME 47-- FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26 2008

### **Court: Indian child custody case requires proof of DHS efforts**

Trial courts may not terminate parental rights of Native American parents unless they determine the Department of Human Services provided services and programs to attempt to keep the family together, the Court of Appeals ruled in a case involving an Indian mother whose rights to an older child had been terminated and first child died from head injuries.

In the prior termination case, DHS did create a service plan which the mother refused to follow, and caseworkers testified in this case the mother had a pattern of choosing relationships with men with a history of domestic violence, including a boyfriend at the time who had been convicted of criminal sexual conduct.

But the Court of Appeals, reversing the trial court's termination order, said the U.S. Indian Child Welfare Act explicitly requires in each case that the state show it provided medical services and rehabilitative programs prior to breaking up a family. They added the trial court gave no indication it was aware it had to make those findings before entering a termination order.

What constitutes active efforts by DHS officials split the court (*in the matter of Ashtyn Jasmine Roe*, [COA docket No. 283642](#)), with Judges William Whitbeck and Jane Markey saying that can include consideration of past efforts that were proven futile, with a determination to be made under a clear and convincing evidence standard.

They did hold that "active efforts" means an obligation on "to take an involved, rather than a passive, approach when providing remedial services and rehabilitative programs to an Indian family."

But in a [dissent](#), Judge Elizabeth Gleicher said it is insufficient for the department to show what it did in prior termination cases. "Previously provided services unlikely can satisfy the 'active efforts' requirement, and a court may not presume, based solely on prior services, that current services 'would be futile,'" she said.

In this case, she said the department produced no evidence it provided active efforts to keep the family together, which she said must have a temporal meaning.

## Michigan Court of Appeals Ruling in ICWA Case

From MIRS:

### **Federal Law Keeps Indian Mother, Baby Together**

A Native American mother with a history of dating abusive men will be allowed to keep her newborn daughter, despite the cries of state social workers that a reunification could put the baby in physical and emotional danger.

The Court of Appeals ruled today that [Mother] should be given custody of 11-month-old [Daughter] based on a strict federal law the stresses the preservation of Indian households.

A ruling signed by appellate judges William **WHITBECK** and Jane **MARKEY** reverses a lower court ruling by saying that social workers didn't do everything it could have under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) to keep the family together.

[Mother] of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians has given birth to three children. Her oldest son, was killed in 2005 by a blow to the head in what investigators believe was a homicide on a day only [Mother] and her then-boyfriend were watching the boy.

After the death, the Department of Human Services (DHS) took away [Mother's] second child, [Redacted], after the mother failed to comply with her service plan. When [Daughter] was born, DHS again stepped in and urged the court that the newborn be removed from [Mother's] care, even though the mother told the court she had turned her life around and was with a new, non-abusive boyfriend.

But the Court of Appeals pointed to ICWA, which was put in place out of concern that American Indian families were being disproportionately separated more than non-American Indian families. Under ICWA rules, a court must find "beyond a reasonable doubt" that a child is likely to incur in serious emotional or physical damage if kept with the parents and that "active efforts" must be tried first.

In this case, the separation of [Daughter] was not viewed through this lens and cannot take place. Judge Elizabeth **GLEICHER** wrote in a separate opinion that she, too, would have reunited the baby with her mother based on ICWA, but wrote separately because she disagreed with the majority's interpretation over some of the details of ICWA.

Note: this story was downloaded from a blog that redacted the names in brackets.

## **Deadline to apply for seats is Friday**

Posted by [Jackson Citizen Patriot](#) September 29, 2008 07:36AM

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners is accepting applications to fill two vacancies. The Department of Human Services Board has an opening for one public member, with a term expiring in 2011.

The Land Bank Authority has an opening for a member with construction experience. This term expires in 2012.

The deadline for submitting an application is Friday. Applications are available and can be submitted online via [www.co.jackson.mi.us](http://www.co.jackson.mi.us) They are also available on the sixth floor of the County Tower Building, 120 W. Michigan Ave., or by calling 788-4335.

Forms can be mailed to this address or faxed to 780-4755.

# Leelanau Enterprise

## G-T Catholic Schools honors 8

*Inductees in hall of fame include 4 from Leelanau.*

When the eight new members of the Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools Hall of Fame are inducted Saturday, Leelanau County will be well represented. Earl E. Glaesmer, Stuart D. Hubbell, Mary (Burns) Marois and Thomas D. Plamondon Sr., O.D., all of Leelanau County, along with Francis J. “Hunce” Martineau, Anslem J. Mikowski, Gerald J. Mikowski and Thomas S. Monaghan will be inducted into the GTACS Hall of Fame.

The ceremony, at which each inductee’s ceremonial plaque information will be read by a family member, starts at 10 a.m. in Kohler Auditorium at St. Francis High School in Traverse City. All the inductees will also be recognized at halftime of St. Francis’ Homecoming football game against Boyne City at Thirlby Field Saturday afternoon. The game begins at 1 p.m.



Mary Marois

Marois, of Bingham Township, said she learned through a phone call that she had been nominated for hall of fame consideration by Barb Lemcool.

“I am just humbled to mentioned in the same sentence as with all the people being honored. When I think of the contributions these people made to our community, our church, I am in awe,” she said.

Marois, whose maiden name was Burns, graduated from St. Francis in 1964. She attended Northwestern Michigan College and Western Michigan University, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in social work and a master’s degree in public administration. Marois spent her entire 39-year career in social work with the State of Michigan, and retired in February as executive director of the Department of Human Service for Grand Traverse and Leelanau counties.

She is known as an advocate for children, and was recognized by her peers with numerous awards throughout her career. In 2004, she received the Humanitarian of the Year award from Child and Family Services of Northwest Michigan.

In addition to her social work, Marois spent time with the United Way, the National Cherry Festival, the Traverse Health Clinic and Coalition, and the Leelanau County Family Coordinating Council.

Note: this is an edited version of the story that appeared at <http://www.leelanaunews.com/blog/2008/09/28/g-t-catholic-schools-honors-8/>

[www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-ap-mi-heatingcosts,0,516399.story](http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-ap-mi-heatingcosts,0,516399.story)

**chicagotribune.com**

## **State: Michigan heating bills may rise 21 percent**

By DAVID EGGERT

Associated Press Writer

10:14 AM CDT, September 29, 2008

LANSING, Mich.

Michigan residents should brace for a 21 percent jump in the cost to heat their homes with natural gas this winter.

The Michigan Public Service Commission says the average residential heating bill will be \$193 a month from November through March.

The primary culprit for higher heating costs is crude oil prices that rose sharply earlier this year.

About eight in 10 Michigan homes use natural gas for space heating.

Heating oil costs also are expected to increase.

The PSC released its winter energy appraisal Monday. The Salvation Army says it has had to turn away 6,000 people seeking help with utility bills this year.

The state says financial assistance is available for qualifying low-income residents.

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September 27, 2008

## Community Action hopes change will bring opportunity

**Darby Prater**  
*The Enquirer*

Community Action Agency of South Central Michigan has shortened its name to Community Action, the organization announced Friday.

Officials said the name change will increase the agency's visibility in the community, and hopefully will attract more private funding to support programs, which include Head Start for preschoolers and Meals on Wheels for seniors.

Community Action serves low-income and impoverished families and individuals in Barry, Branch, Calhoun and St. Joseph counties.

"Community Action is short and crisp for what we do," said Monte Bordner, president of the board of directors and a St. Joseph County commissioner. "We will have new opportunities to garner local funds to help facilitate programs."

The agency will continue to receive 85 percent of its funding from the federal government, and about 14 percent from the state.

While the agency could have sought additional funding without changing its name, going by a simpler name should help the organization gain visibility in the public eye, especially among those the agency serves. The prior name was so long people only referred to it as an acronym, CAASCM, and Macfarlane said the agency wants to appeal to more people by toning down the governmental sound of its name.

"Any time you're dealing with government dollars, there are strings attached," Bordner said.

Funding for the name change initiative was made possible through a capacity-building grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to hire a marketing consultant to assess the agency's needs and to make recommendations to help the agency accomplish its long-term goals.

Community Action Chief Executive Officer Nancy Macfarlane said programs are growing, and the agency needs more funding flexibility.

"Our budget has grown, but we have fluctuation in our level of funding," Macfarlane said. "Head Start has been flat-funded for years. Our costs continue to go up. Relying on the federal government to make sure we keep up with just inflation is not going to work, so we need to seek other funding sources."

Macfarlane said there are 33 Community Action programs in the State of Michigan.

"They all go by different names, yet they all offer similar programs," Macfarlane said, adding 270 agencies nationally have changed their name to Community Action in an effort to make the agency as recognizable as other nationally known organizations such as the United Way or the American Red Cross.

"We want people to understand who we are and make our vision a lot clearer," Macfarlane said. "We want people to know we're out there providing real services."

In addition to Meals on Wheels and Head Start, the agency offers assistance to low-income families

for utility bills, emergency food services, senior transportation and more. For more information, visit [www.caascn.org](http://www.caascn.org).

"We want to be able to provide those services to as many people as we can who qualify," Macfarlane said. "We know people need help."

"It's not just about a name change," said Terry Langston, vice president of the board of directors. "The focus is on our mission of moving people from poverty to independence."

*Darby Prater can be reached at 966-0589 or [dprater@battlecr.gannett.com](mailto:dprater@battlecr.gannett.com).*

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Saturday, September 27, 2008

# Jobless pay bill fades in Senate

## Bush opposes \$61M House-passed plan to extend benefits in Michigan, other states.

Deb Price / The Detroit News

**WASHINGTON** -- The White House threatened Friday to veto a \$61 million economic stimulus bill that would extend jobless benefits by 20 weeks for workers in Michigan and other states hardest hit by the economic downturn.

The bill cleared the House 264-158. Senate Democrats couldn't get the 60 votes needed Friday morning to move forward their version of the proposal, and it was unclear if the Senate would try again.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said it's unfair that Washington was moving to bail out Wall Street but balking at helping America's working families.

"Without a robust economic recovery plan for Main Street, Americans will not trust any financial bailout for Wall Street," he said in a statement distributed Friday.

The legislation proposes to extend unemployment benefits by seven weeks in all states, plus an additional 13 weeks in states with unemployment rates at 6 percent or higher.

Michigan's unemployment rate is the highest in the country -- 8.9 percent.

The national average is 6.1 percent.

"If we don't act, over 1 million Americans are going to exhaust their unemployment benefits before the end of the year," U.S. Rep. Sander Levin, D-Royal Oak, said on the House floor. But U.S. Rep. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., dismissed the Democratic proposal as a costly election year gimmick.

"I think (Americans) would be much more stimulated if you let them keep the money they have," he said.

About 196,000 unemployed workers in Michigan would be eligible for the extended benefits.

In addition to extending unemployment benefits, the \$61 billion bill would provide \$3.3 billion in loans to develop advanced car batteries and give states \$12.8 billion to build roads and extra money for Medicaid and other safety-net programs for the poor.

Michigan would get an extra \$360 million to help it deal with its growing Medicaid rolls, which now cover 1.6 million residents.

Michael Singer, an unemployed automotive marketer from Grand Blanc, said he needs longer jobless



benefits.

"I need this, absolutely," said Singer. "I'd leave the state of Michigan for a full-time job, but I can't sell my house. People are really hurting."

Bush signed an earlier 13-week jobless benefits extension June 30. Nearly 1.1 million Americans, 58,000 in Michigan, will have exhausted those extensions by the end of the year, Levin's office said.

In a statement, the Bush administration said the House bill "will not provide short-term stimulus ... (T)he bill would simply increase government spending, including self-perpetuating entitlement spending by tens of billions of dollars."

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.detroitnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080927/POLITICS/809270322>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

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## Hungry for help: Muskegon residents forced to find assistance as economy worsens

Muskegon Chronicle.com

Posted by [jsteph](#) September 27, 2008 22:32PM



**CoCo Walters**Volunteers from Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry load a pallet of shave gel and other various items from the Second Harvest Gleaners Food Depot in downtown Muskegon. Food is brought in from Grand Rapids and distributed to between 17-25 local agencies twice a month.

Charles Hunt, a man who's worked two jobs most of his life to feed his family and put a roof over their heads, has never asked anybody for anything. But in May, after he broke his wrist and had to be off work for seven weeks from his job as a courier for Kent Records in Grand Rapids, the 41-year-old Muskegon man was desperate. There was little, or no food in the house.

"I didn't worry for myself," Hunt says, "but I worried about them ... my wife and kids."

Hunt wasn't eligible for short-term disability because his injury wasn't work-related; he was playing softball after hours with his kids. Nor did he qualify for unemployment compensation or food stamps. For almost two months, he brought no money into a household that includes his wife, Allison Hunt, 43, and four children at home -- Chuck, 20, and 8-year-old triplets, Jenna, Becca and Nathaniel. The Hunts also have a 22-year-old daughter, Kristina Hunt, who lives on her own.

"We've always worked hard," Allison Hunt says. "We didn't have a lot, but we made do. We tried to save ahead, but this (injury) was so unexpected."

In 2007, the Hunts made about \$47,000 between the two of them, but the salary that Allison Hunt earns as a full-time housekeeper for North Ottawa Community Hospital in Grand Haven simply wasn't enough to keep up the payments on their mobile home and lot rent in Egelston Township. Add to it car payments, utilities and groceries -- and something had to give.

"Honestly, I tried almost everything else," Charles Hunt says. "This is the first time I've ever been out of work. I didn't know what to do."

Finally at the urging of a relative, he called the Muskegon Rescue Mission in May and asked if his family was eligible to get some groceries from the food pantry.

"This is the first time I've ever had to ask anybody for help," he says. "I've never had to do this before."

As the nation's economy worsens and Michigan's unemployment rate reaches double digits, hundreds of Muskegon County residents are following in the Hunts' unfamiliar footsteps.

"I've never seen it this bad before," says Gail Kraft, executive director of Love INC of Muskegon County, who has been in the "caring business" since 1993, first with the Department of Human Services and for the past five years with Love.

At least 32,475 people in this community fall into the category of "the working poor," people who are employed but are struggling so financially, they have to ask for food, request help with their utilities, mortgage payments or rent, even ask for money to fill their gas tanks -- many of them for the first time.



**Walters Gordon and Betty Huss, both Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry volunteers, help to load cases of barbecue sauce and other non-perishables from Second Harvest Gleaners' Food Depot in downtown Muskegon.**

"I think it can be pretty frantic for people until they find a resource ... someone to help," says Mike Gilleece, director of the Christian Community Center in Muskegon Heights.

There are days Community Access Line of the Lakeshore, or CALL 211 -- a service that connects people to agencies or volunteers who can help with a specific need -- takes as many as 250 calls in a 24-hour period. More than half are asking for help with housing, utilities and food, says Susan Howell, the agency's executive director.

"People are calling for basic needs," she says. "Many are a direct result of layoffs or losing their jobs, or even individuals and families who have stable employment but who struggle with the rising food costs -- and who can afford gas these days?"

The number of people asking for help for the first time has increased dramatically across the community, say the "first responders" who volunteer and work at Muskegon County's extensive network of faith-based organizations, social service agencies, food pantries and soup kitchens. Across the board, workers say they're seeing a 20 percent to 25 percent increase every month in requests for help.

"Every day, we see the working poor and middle class in crisis. There is such a sense of desperation," said Phyllis Williams, director of community ministries at the Muskegon Rescue Mission.

Williams greeted Charles Hunt at the mission with enough food to feed his large family, a memory that still causes him to blurt out: "Oh, my God!" She "listened to my story," he says, then urged him to return every week while he was off work, so the family's limited funds could be used for other bills.

It is advice given every day by Williams, Kraft and other agency workers who are on the front lines of service, reaching out to those who need help, many for the first time ever.

At least 25 food pantries are scattered throughout the county, housed in churches, shelters, missions and agencies. Many of those same organizations pay for monthly visits from Second Harvest Gleaners of West Michigan's mobile food pantries, filled with perishables like fresh fruit and vegetables, milk and bread.

"There's food. There may not be much else to offer right now, but there's food," says Judy Clark-Ochs, a member of the food subcommittee meeting of the Muskegon County Emergency Needs Committee.

The flood of first-time clients is putting a huge strain on area food banks and other services. At both the Rescue Mission and Muskegon's Loaves & Fishes Pantry, two of the largest food banks in the area, the shelves are emptier than they've been in years. In some spots, they're even bare. Both food and monetary donations are down, as well.

Workers speculate that people who used to give -- whether it was a check or an extra case of peanut butter -- can no longer afford to because everyone's feeling the financial squeeze.

"In some cases, they're (former donors) now asking for help themselves," Kraft says.

And individuals aren't the only ones suffering. Last week, Kraft received notice from a church that it can't fulfill its annual financial pledge to Love INC. Its collection plates are considerably lighter than in the past "and there isn't the money to give," she says.

On Sept. 16, when 78 families came to Loaves & Fishes food pantry in downtown Muskegon for food, the only vegetables on the shelves were canned diced tomatoes. Ten of the 78 families were there for the first time. They got granola bars instead of cereal because the supply was so low. Instead of canned fruit, they took home lemonade.

"I've just never seen anything like it," says pantry volunteer Nancy Peters.

Many of the larger pantries buy food at a reduced cost through Second Harvest Gleaners of West Michigan to supplement the donations they receive. But the demand for food from the Gleaners is so high, they are unable to order as much as they once did. Still, everything is used. On Sept. 18, a Gleaners truck delivered 20,450 pounds of food ordered by 17 area food pantries and agencies to Muskegon County.

That food -- 10½ tons -- will be gone within two weeks, Clark-Ochs says.

Supper House is a soup kitchen at Mission for Area People in Muskegon Heights, supported by 25 churches, as well as Temple B'nai Israel in the area. On average, 120 adults -- many of whom are employed -- and their children eat their evening meal at Supper House Monday through Friday.

"These people are working and working hard, but there's just not enough paycheck to go around," says Florence Sturtevant, who is a volunteer cook with her husband, Art.

Dwindling food supplies and desperate times aren't the only crisis at hand. No funds will be available for Muskegon County this fall and early winter from the federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program, formerly administered by FEMA. In June, the county was awarded \$146,409 in federal funds to help clients on a case-by-case basis with food, shelter and utility needs at 13 agencies. That money is gone. No one knows when, or if, more will be released.

"I'm burning out at having to say 'No, we have no money for that,' " Williams told her colleagues at the food subcommittee meeting, "and I know other agencies are in the same situation."

David Eling, executive director of the West Michigan Veterans Service Center, took calls from 39 veterans in August -- most of them employed -- who asked for help paying their mortgages or rent, utilities and gas.

"It's tough. If I help this guy out over here, what if I can't help that guy over there?" Eling says. "Sometimes I feel like Solomon."

At Mission for Area People in Muskegon Heights, a faith-based ministry supported by the 13 Methodist churches in the area, there is help available on one of the most critical fronts -- medical support. The ministry has distributed more than \$50,000 over the past decade to help people pay for their prescriptions. The fund was recently boosted by a Strategic Initiative for the Poor grant from Mercy General Health Partners.

"I get calls from people who are buying only one medicine at a time because that's all they can afford, and they have seven prescriptions," says director of ministries Diana Wright-Stubbs. "I get calls from people who've just lost their jobs and so they've lost their health insurance."

Of all the calls she gets, she says, most are for help with prescriptions. But none is as grave as those asking for food.

Because these are "desperate times," the pantry is offering more "generous portions" -- three meals per person for a full seven days. But Wright-Stubbs is looking beyond the immediate need, she says, toward a healthier future for the ministry's clients.

She recently instituted what she's calling a "healthy" pantry. No sugared cereals are offered. Low-salt items, fresh produce, even fresh chicken, eggs and turkey are for the taking every day. Clients are eligible to come every two months.

Besides serving up food, MAP also offers budgeting classes to its clients, as do Love INC and the Rescue Mission. Families who qualify for Muskegon County Habitat for Humanity's homes are required to take the classes. Clients are matched up with mentors, one on one, to talk about fiscal responsibility and financial duties.

"When clients come back every month, we have to say: 'Let's see. How can we help you become more self-sufficient?' " Wright-Stubbs says. "Let's show you how to help yourself."

Last week, they went one step farther -- and offered classes in self-esteem and stress management, taught by MAP administrative assistant Mardee Macha, a retired family life education teacher.

"Can you imagine the stress someone's going through?" Macha asks.

At Love INC, mentors even talk with clients about "the levels of grief" after they've lost their jobs or homes -- or have to make the Solomon-like decision every day whether to feed their families, pay the rent or make a car payment, like Charles Hunt.

Hunt is back on the job, working anywhere from 40 to 48 hours a week again. He's going to lose his car, probably this weekend. When it came to paying rent or car payments, he chose rent. Before he turned to the Rescue Mission for help, he went to a check-cashing store, and he's still trying to pay off the interest he accrued on "that bad decision."

"I didn't know there was help out there," he says. "I didn't even know there were food pantries, but when I went there? There were a lot of people there."

## Faithful help for poor rooted in churches

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Rev. Moses J. Jones used to seek food donations from grocery stores and provide "good will dinners" to the hungry.

There still are people in Muskegon who can remember seeing the Rev. Moses J. Jones scouring local grocery stores for food donations for families who needed them.



Some people have been here long enough to remember Jones' "good will dinners," which did double duty, feeding the hungry and, at the same time, fostering interracial harmony.

Decades before there was a name for it, Jones, pastor of Muskegon's John Wesley AME Zion Church from 1936 until his retirement in 1972, was doing outreach to those in need.

Long before the grim Michigan economy of the 21st century put a new face on poverty, there was an old one in its place. And as far back as the Great Depression, people of faith like Jones were working to stock people's closets and fill their empty bellies.

That was particularly true in some black neighborhoods at a time when churches often filled a gap as the one vital institution to which residents could turn. Historically and not coincidentally,

the black church has served as a combination of civic organization, social-service agency and even protest headquarters.

"It was the only thing we owned," said Bill Gill, now a Muskegon County commissioner and a lifelong member of John Wesley AME Zion.

If Muskegon-area residents tend to associate church-bound, human needs ministry with the past quarter century, it's not surprising. Some of the best-known local faith-based initiatives -- the COGIC Center and Love INC, for instance -- sprang to prominence in the 1980s and '90s.

Love INC -- Love in the Name of Christ -- has a mission to encourage Christians to put their faith in action and to mobilize churches to transform communities and lives.

In fact, Virgil Gulker -- the Holland, Mich., social worker who founded Love INC -- has said he was motivated by his own frustration over what he saw as a disconnect between churches and people who were hurting, hungry or homeless.

As for the COGIC Center, it is an outgrowth of Bishop Nathaniel Wells Jr.'s vision for "total man ministry," meaning ministry not only to the souls of people but to their bodies and minds as well. Wells is pastor of Muskegon's Holy Trinity Institutional Church of God in Christ.

COGIC, which stands for Community Organization Giving Individual Care, houses a collection of programs, including a clothes closet, a food pantry, home ownership, education, transportation and child care.

Wells' vision has served as a model for Church of God in Christ congregations across the country. He has said the church's ministry is not just faith-based ministry but divinely ordained destiny.

The Rev. Norm Swier expressed similar sentiments. When Gail Kraft, executive director of Love INC, identified Fifth Reformed Church as one of several local congregations to commit to ministerial outreach, Swier said the decision was made as much for congregation members themselves as for the people they have served.

Four years ago, Swier said, members of Fifth Reformed went through author Rick Warren's "Forty Days of Purpose" discipleship program. That experience, as well as a follow-up program called "Forty Days of Community," served as a catalyst for ministry at the church, Swier said.

Since then, the church has hosted scheduled stops by Second Harvest Food Gleaners' mobile food pantries, followed up on referrals from Love INC, and organized small group community projects.

"We're just trying to be faithful to the Gospel," Swier said.

Decades before such far-reaching programs as Love INC, Moses J. Jones' ministry presaged that kind of work. The grandson of slaves, Jones came to Muskegon from Hammond, Ind., in 1936. At 6-foot-3, he was a towering figure. And legendary.

He would collect day-old goods from local bakeries and distribute them to people in need. Gill also remembers Jones distributing men's suits donated by clothing stores when styles changed.

"He'd charge you \$10," Gill said. "If I didn't have the \$10, he'd give me the suit."

Gill was fairly certain that Jones was not financing his charitable work out of his own pockets, if only because he "didn't have much money of his own to begin with."

"I think a lot of people gave him resources because of what he was doing," Gill said.

Almost immediately after arriving in Muskegon, Jones established a community recreation center in the basement of John Wesley AME Zion Church, where black youths had a place where they could escape the streets. There were tables where teens could play pool or table tennis and where they could join basketball and baseball teams.

Days after Jones' death in 1989, Muskegon city commissioners voted to pay him tribute by renaming the northern end of Seaway Drive in his honor. Today that stretch of highway is known as the Moses J. Jones Parkway.